

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-05 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 OPR-02 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 AGR-20

DRC-01 AID-20 OMB-01 NIC-01 /157 W

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R 010743Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4684

INFO AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

DIA

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 10710

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (MRN 10710 VICE 0710)

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJECT: STUDENT LEADERSHIP CRISIS

REF: A. FBIS D290853Z JUNE 74

SUMMARY: THE MODERATE LEADERSHIP OF THE NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER OF THAILAND (NSCT) HAS RESIGNED FOR THE SECOND TIME DURING ITS TERM OF OFFICE. WHILE THE STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE FARMER DEMONSTRATION IN BANGKOK APPARENTLY STIMULATED THE RESIGNATION THE LAST MONTH HAS WITNESSED CONSIDERABLE JOCKEYING AS THE NSCT PREPARED FOR EXECUTIVE LEVEL ELECTIONS. THE VICTOR IN THESE COMING ELECTIONS WILL SET THE TONE FOR THE STUDENT MOVEMENT. IF MORE ACTIVIST ELEMENTS GAIN CONTROL OF THE NSCT, THEN STUDENT PROTESTS SHOULD INCREASE AND FOCUS ON SUCH THEMES AS THE AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE. END SUMMARY.

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1. NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER OF THAILAND (NSCT) SECRETARY

GENERAL SOMBAT THAMRONGTHANYAWONG AND DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS KANOK WONGTRAKON ANNOUNCED THEIR RESIGNATIONS JUNE 30 (REF A). AT ISSUE WAS THE NSCT HANDLING OF THE RECENT FARMERS' DEMONSTRATION IN BANGKOK WHICH BROKE UP THIS WEEKEND. THE NSCT MODERATES CLAIMED THAT STUDENT LEADERS FROM THE FEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT STUDENTS OF THAILAND (FIST) INTERFERED WITH THE NSCT DEMONSTRATION. THEY SPECIFICALLY SAID THAT THE FIST LEADERS MOVED THE FARMERS FROM IN FRONT OF GOVERNMENT HOUSE TO SANAM LUANG AND MADE INCREASINGLY STRONG DEMANDS ON THE GOVERNMENT WHEN THE FARMERS WERE ALREADY CONTENT WITH GOVERNMENT CONCESSIONS. THE NSCT LEADERS CLAIMED THAT FIST INTERFERENCE PROLONGED THE DEMONSTRATION.

2. WHATEVER THE IMMEDIATE STIMULUS TO SOMBAT'S RESIGNATION THE NSCT LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN UNDER ATTACK FOR THE LAST MONTH, AS VARIOUS STUDENT FACTIONS JOCKEY FOR INFLUENCE IN THE UPCOMING NSCT EXECUTIVE LEVEL ELECTIONS. IN AN AIRGRAM WHICH WE WILL BE POUCHING TO WASHINGTON JULY 2, WE ILLUSTRATE HOW THE PEOPLE FOR DEMOCRACY (PFD) INTERFERED WITH THE NSCT OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS. THE PFD APPARENTLY FORMED AN ALLIANCE WITH DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS WIRAT SAKCHIRAPAPONG. THIS ALLIANCE COMMITTED THE NSCT TO SUPPORTING THE RECENT TEXTILE WORKERS STRIKE AND CRITICIZING THE AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE, WHEN IN FACT WIRAT USED THE NSCT'S NAME WITHOUT PERMISSION FROM OTHER NSCT LEADERS.

3. COMMENT: THE MODERATE LEADERSHIP OF THE NSCT APPEARS TO TAKE ITS RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE STUDENT CONSTITUENCY SERIOUSLY. PFD AND FIST PRESSURE CAUSED THE NSCT LEADERSHIP TO RESIGN LAST NOVEMBER. THE ELECTIONS WHICH FOLLOWED THAT RESIGNATION PLACED NEW FACES AT THE DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL LEVEL AND RENEWED THE LEADERSHIP'S MANDATE. IN THIS SENSE THE NSCT IS ONE OF THE MOST DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS IN THAILAND.

4. WIRAT, WHO IS IN THE ACTIVIST CAMP, IS IN CHARGE UNTIL THE ELECTIONS. SINCE ELECTIONS WERE ALREADY SCHEDULED FOR MID-JULY, THE NSCT MAY DECIDE TO HOLD THEM

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EARLY. SOMBAT IN FACT MAY HAVE RESIGNED IN ORDER TO PRESS FOR EARLY ELECTIONS. WIRAT'S LAME DUCK ADMINISTRATION, WHILE IT MAY INDULGE IN A FLURRY OF ACTIVITY, IS UNLIKELY TO HOLD THE RESPECT OF THE GENERAL STUDENT BODY, AS SOMBAT DID. UNTIL THE NSCT ELECTIONS, THE STUDENT MOVEMENT WILL LACK SOME OF ITS PREVIOUS UNITY AS VARIOUS STUDENT LEADERS TRY TO BUILD THEMSELVES UP AND OTHERWISE ACT LIKE CANDIDATES FOR ELECTIVE OFFICE.

5. THE NSCT STILL IS THE PARAMOUNT ORGANIZATION IN THE STUDENT MOVEMENT. THE PFD OR FIST IS IMPORTANT SINCE EITHER CAN INFLUENCE THE NSCT. IF THE ACTIVISTS GAIN MORE INFLUENCE OVER THE NSCT AS A RESULT OF THE APPROACHING ELECTIONS, THEM WE COULD EXPECT CHANGES IN THE STYLE AND TARGETS OF STUDENT PROTESTS. MOST STUDENT PROTESTS SINCE JANUARY HAVE BEEN BY COMMUNIQUE OR SEMINAR, AND HAVE NOT REALLY FOCUSED ON ANTI-AMERICAN THEMES. AN ACTIVIST NSCT LEADERSHIP WOULD BE MORE WILLING TO MOVE FROM PROTESTS BY COMMUNIQUE TO RALLIES. IT WOULD ALSO TEND TO FOCUS ON ANTI-AMERICAN THEMES.
KINTNER

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